

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL  
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT  
LAWRENCE**

**INFORMANT: EMILINE PROVOST  
INTERVIEWER: JULIETE BISTANY  
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**J = JULIET  
E = EMILINE**

**SG-LA-T556**

J: I mean it sounded (--)

E: Well I had to help my mother when I was sixteen.

J: Oh I see. So when you turned sixteen you quit school.

E: You couldn't (--) Yeah, you had to be sixteen to get out of school. You couldn't leave school before you were sixteen.

J: And when you left school where did you go to work.

E: I worked in a shoe shop at the Methuen Shoe. And then I got married at the age of eighteen.

J: Okay, let's go back to your first job. You were freshly out of school, how did you hear about this job at Methuen Shoe. What (--)

E: Well somebody had said they needed help, and I went there. And I started, we were making [pause], I was stitching two cents a case. Never forget it.

J: And how many cases a day would you do?

E: I'd come home maybe with three dollars a week. And my mother says to me, it costs more for you to be on the bus, so stay home.

J: All right. Where were you living at that time?

E: On Park Street.

J: On Park Street. (E: Yeah) And where was this place that you worked at?

E: The Methuen Shoe. I'd have to take the bus.

J: Yeah, I know. Where was it located?

E: On Osgood Street, Methuen.

J: Oh, so you took the bus.

E: Yeah. And it cost more for the bus than what I was making.

J: How many hours a day, or a week did you work?

E: Oh, I'd work, I'd start at seven and I'd come home at three.

J: Oh, those weren't bad hours. (E: Oh yeah) Was it piece work, or uh?

E: No, there was no piece work then. Just two cents a case. It went by your cases.

J: Uh, what, what exactly was your job?

E: I was uh, pasting vamps.

J: What year was that?

E: Um, let's see. '32, '34, 1934.

J: 1934. That was in the middle of Depression. What can you tell me about your memories about the Depression.

E: Well my mother had the store. And I remember they had a strike at the Arlington Mill.

J: Oh really!

E: I was about thirteen.

J: Do you know anything about that strike?

E: I remembered the uh, police on the horses. They had a strike on the Arlington, but I was so young we were just watching.

J: You don't remember too much?

E: No. And then I remember when the um, banks uh, people lost their money, because my mother lost money from, in the bank too. That was 1929 when the banks crashed.

J: Yes. You were still in school though.

E: Yeah. (J: All right) But my mother had the store.

J: And she had money in the bank and she lost it?

E: She lost it.

J: So you would, to say that you were having a hard time during Depression.

E: No, because we didn't want for anything, where my mother had the store.

J: Did you buy new clothes whenever you needed them?

E: She'd buy us new clothes for the holidays. We always had new clothes for Easter and the holidays, always.

J: Did she sew, or did she?

E: No, she was too busy. She'd go picking blueberries. My sister and I go selling blueberries to help with the expenses.

J: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, after working for the shoe shop, how long did you stay there?

E: Um, I stayed there only about two months.

J: Then what happened?

E: Then I stayed in the store. And then I got married at the age of eighteen. This was in 1936. And uh, I have the five children. And I didn't work until 1942.

J: Okay. I, I understand that after the Methuen Shoe you worked for the WPA?

E: I did. That was uh, when Roosevelt went into office uh, to (--)

J: What year was that?

E: I think he went in in 1937.

J: Well I think it was a little earlier than that, but anyway. (E: But uh) Tell me what you remember about that.

E: When he went into office he started to CC Camps, WPA, ERA. I worked for the WPA for a year.

J: Were you married?

E: Yes, then I got pregnant. (J: Oh) And I didn't go back to work until 1942, during wartime. My first job was in the Pacific Mill. I worked there two years. And from there I went to the Arlington, and I stayed there till the place shut down 1950.

J: Okay, wait a minute. Let's back up a little bit. I want to ask you what you did in the WPA.

E: Sewing. Sewing dresses. We were basting. (J: You were basting) Basting.

J: Where did they put you when you did this work if, (--) Where were you?

E: I'm trying to think of where (--) Where Fields used to be.

J: Where Fields used to be.

E: Um, ooh boy! (J: In Lawrence?) It was uh, (J: J. M. Field ?) yeah! (J: On Methuen Street?) Upstairs. Yeah, we were upstairs.

J: All right. Aaah, how many women?

E: Oh, there was quite a few. (J: Quite a few?) Quite a few.

J: And how much did you get paid for doing this basting.

E: We were making \$28.00 every two weeks. We were getting paid every two weeks then.

J: Um, every two weeks. (E: Yeah) And that money came in handy?

E: Because everything was cheap. You could buy it. You could live on it. The rent was \$3.00 a week.

J: Where were you living at that time?

E: Uh, I was living on Myrtle Court. (J: Umhm) And um, I was married then. And I had to leave when I got pregnant.

J: Tell me this. Uh, in those days did you have a lot of girlfriends?

E: We didn't have that money because my mother was so strict Julie. My mother was very strict. We never went out.

J: She wouldn't allow you to go out?

E: She wouldn't let us go out!

J: But remember now , you're telling me you were married now.

E: I eloped!

J: Oh, can you tell me a little bit about what happened?

E: I eloped when I was eighteen. My mother was so strict I eloped!

J: How did you meet your husband?

E: Uh, I knew this girl on Myrtle Street, and she had had company. And he was from Rhode Island. And I knew him about a month and I got married.

J: Your mother never allowed you to date, is that what you're saying?

E: Nope. Them days it was different than now.

J: Did you have a curfew?

E: Oh yeah! We had to have, when I was young I'd have to be in the house for eight o'clock.

J: Eight o'clock. Were you allowed to go out dancing with the girls?

E: Nope, No. No dancing, nothing.

J: How about wearing cosmetics, makeup?

E: No. No cosmetics, no slacks.

J: I see. Um, and you couldn't date? How, how would you have gotten married if you stayed home and you listened to your (--)

E: I really don't know. [chuckles]

J: In other words, what I'm trying to say is, did they fix you up in those days? Did family (--)

E: She tried to fix me up with an Armenian fellow who was sixty years old.

J: She did?

E: I wish your mother and father were living.

J: Why, what happened. Tell me about it.

E: They used to come to the store, deliver stuff to your father. They tried to match me up.

J: And he was sixty? (E: Sixty) And why would they want to match a young girl up with a man sixty?

E: That's how they done it then.

J: But what was the reasoning behind it?

E: They match you up!

J: Is it because he had a little money?

E: I guess so.

J: And so you rebelled.

E: And I rebelled, and then I eloped.

J: And you met your husband through a girlfriend. (E: Yeah) Is, is that what happened to a lot of the uh (--)

E: Oh, a lot of them.

J: They went behind their parents.

E: Behind their parent's backs.

J: What year was that Emiline?

E: I got married 1936. I had just turned eighteen.

J: Where did you elope to?

E: Salem, New Hampshire.

J: How did you tell your mother after that?

E: [Laughs] She had my clothes waiting for me, get out.

J: Did she talk to you after?

E: Yeah, after six months after she started to talk.

J: So it was when you were married and pregnant you went to WPA.

E: And I was so sick I had to quit work.

J: What happened at work? Why did you, why were you sick?

E: Well I was sick when I was pregnant. I (--)

J: How were the conditions during WPA?

E: Very good. Everybody got along. It was very very good. We enjoyed it.

J: Tell me this. What did you and your husband do on Sundays for meals?

E: Stay home. No cars. So you'd stay home.

J: What did he do for a living?

E: He worked in the mill.

J: What mill?

E: Um, he worked in the [Woolen?] Mill.

J: And what did he do?

E: Card room.

J: Did he make good money?

E: No. You didn't make much them days. Twenty-one dollars a week. That wasn't much you made.

J: For how many hours? Do you know how many hours?

E: That was eight hours.

J: Eight hours a day? (E: Yeah) Yeah, it was a forty hour week (E: yeah) at that time. Umhm.

What was, like on a Sunday, a typical Sunday dinner, or a typical day? Did you go to church together?

E: No. If I went to church I'd go by myself.

J: Okay. And (--)

E: Then come home, you'd make dinner, and you stay home because there was no place to go. Unless you went to a show at night. And we'd go to the Star. In them days the Star was only ten cents.

J: So you'd go to the Star, the movies.

E: We'd go to the movie.

J: And the next day you would go back to work.

E: Go back to work.

J: Okay. So, excuse me, what hospital was your first child born in?

E: My first four children were born at home. No, my first three were born at home. Loretta, Elaine, Jackie. First four at home, and my fifth girl was born at the Lawrence General Hospital.

J: Okay. When you children were born at home, in what year was Loretta born, the first one?

E: 1936.

J: In 1936 when they were born at home, did you have a doctor who'd come in?

E: Oh yeah, I had Doctor Batel.

J: He would come to the house.

E: To the house. And it was only \$25.00 to deliver.

J: Did you go visit him before hand?

E: Every month.

J: Oh, all right. Well why didn't you go to a hospital to have the baby.

E: I didn't want to go to the hospital. I was afraid of a hospital.

J: You were afraid of a hospital. So he came to the house. (E: to the house) Did you have any problems? (E: No) And so you did that for three children. (E: Four) Four children.



E: Claire, he wouldn't take me at home anymore. He says I need the rest. I went to the Lawrence General, and she was born there.

J: Were people still having midwives?

E: I never had a midwife. (E: Did you hear?) I guess some of them were.

J: Really huh? They were, (E: yeah) even in 1940 say, they still had midwives.

E: Because I didn't.

J: Uh huh. When you delivered the children, where were you living?

E: I was living at, Loretta was born 30, 29 Myrtle Court, and my others were born at 423 Hampshire Street. That's in Lawrence.

J: How many years between your children?

E: Between Loretta and Edmond there's two years and eight months; between Edmond/Elaine a year. Between Elaine and Jackie, two years; and between Jackie and Claire, there was two and a half years.

J: Did you work between pregnancies?

E: Yes I did.

J: What made you go back to work?

E: Well we needed the money.

J: Was your husband working steady?

E: He was working, and then he'd be laid off. So I went to work to help out. And my mother took care of the children.

J: That's what I wanted to ask? (E: Yeah) Who took care of the children? (E: My mother) Your mother. Was she still in here store?

E: Yes, my mother was in the store.

J: So these children were raised in a little grocery store. (E: That's right) She took care of the store.

E: Yeah, and she'd take care of the children.

J: Took care of the children. And so every time you had a child you would go back to work.

E: That's right.

J: So after you got married, in 1942 you said to me you worked in the Pacific Mills?

E: In the Pacific. I worked there for about two years. And from there I went to the Arlington until it shut down in 1950.

J: Okay. What were the conditions in the mill when you started working?

E: We were making a \$1.75 an hour.

J: What do you remember about it? Had you been (--)

E: Well no, the mill, we got along good. We had the union.

J: Yeah. Wait a minute. I want to ask you. Were you prepared for what you saw in the mill? When you first walked in that mill?

E: When I first walked in I didn't know what to expect. I thought the wool was going to be falling all over. But then there really was nothing to it after you got used to it.

J: How did you get your first job?

E: I went for it myself.

J: You did? You walked in to the (--)

E: I walked in to the employment office. And during wartime they were hiring them left and right.

J: That's right, it was 1942. So they needed you.

E: They needed the help.

J: Now what shift?

E: I started on the second, and I stayed there till I went to the Arlington on the first shift.

J: Okay, you started on the second meaning two to ten?

E: No, yeah, two to ten.

J: All right. Was it noisy in the mills?

E: Oh yes! And then during wartime you had the blackouts. So when the sirens went, the windows were all painted black, and when the sirens went, you have to put lights (--) You have to put lights out regardless. And then at home, when you'd come home, if there was a black out you had to put your lights out in the house, and you had these dark green shades.

J: Tell me uh, did you mind the dust and the grease in the mill?

E: No, no, because you got used to it. (J: Did you?) It wasn't dusty. It was oily, but you got accustomed to it.

J: How about the noise?

E: The noise after awhile, it didn't bother you. It was when you first started.

J: How about any vibrations? Did (--)

E: No, it didn't bother.

J: What was your first job?

E: My first job was in the um, heavy drawing room. I was a weigh girl. I ran weigh boxes.

J: Tell me, describe that.

E: Uh, it's machinery, and it had a bobbin. And the bobbins would spin. And then when they'd stop automatically you'd have to take them off and put an empty bobbin so those would fill up.

J: Was that hard work?

E: No. No.

J: Oh, then it was fairly easy.

E: No, it wasn't, I didn't mind it. (J: What time uh?) Because when you're young it doesn't bother you.

J: How old were you? You were married though. You were (--)

E: Yeah, I was um, '42, how old was I? I was eighteen in '36. '36 to '42.

J: About twenty-two years old.

E: Twenty-two years old.

J: Yeah. And uh, how much time did they give you for lunch.

E: Oh, you had a half an hour for lunch, and you had a ten minute break.

J: Oh really?

E: Oh yeah, you had your breaks, because they had a union.

J: Tell me about the union. What was the name of the union?

E: AFofL CIO. Yeah.

J: Yeah. And did they do well by the workers?

E: They did, very good.

J: Did you ever go on strike?

E: No, no.

J: In your whole career (--)

E: No, I never went out on strike.

J: You never went on strike. (E: No) Okay. Um, when you went into the mills did they warn you about wearing your jewelry, or about (--)

E: Oh yeah, you had to have your hair tied back. Uh, and you had to make sure the machinery was stopped before you're done any cleaning. They warned you about that, but you had to have your hair tied back, and sleeves had to be away from your wrist.

J: Did you have any problems with jealousy, or other ethnic groups?

E: No, no.

J: How about your boss? Who was your first boss?

E: My section hand was Sutcliffe. What the heck was his name?

J: What nationality was it?

E: Oh they were english. I forgot his name.

J: How about your neighbors? I forgot to ask you about your neighbors.

E: No, I had some good neighbors. We always got along. We never had trouble with any neighbors.

J: Did you live in a neighborhood that was all Lebanese, or what?

E: No, no. Where I was there was a lot of Jewish people, Polish, Russian, and we all got along. Italian.

J: So you never had any (--)

E: We never had any problem (J: any problems) with the neighbors, no.

J: Uh huh. And uh, did you make good friends with some of those people?

E: Oh yeah! They were very good. Because where my mother ran the store we got to know everybody around Park Street.

J: Uh huh. She had a grocery store. (E: Yeah) And how many hours was she opened?

E: She'd open six o'clock in the morning till about eight, nine o'clock at night.

J: How many days a week?

E: That was every day.

J: Seven days a week. She closed it. (E: No) [unclear] And she was all alone without a husband.

E: She was alone, yup.

J: And she was able to run the business. That's great? That's great! Uh, when you did start in the mills did you ever hear of people having accidents? I know you say you were happy.

E: Ah, one.

J: What was that?

E: It was on the [gill?] box. Not the [gill?] box. It was on a (--) Yes it was, the [gill?] box where the combs go up and down. She was putting the yarn through and her finger got caught with the uh, spindles going down. But she was all right. They took her to the hospital. She was (--) That was the only one I ever heard of.

J: They saved the finger? That was the only one. (E: Yeah) Okay. Um, you say you had a ten minute break. (E: Yeah) During the day. Not two, just the one?

E: No, ten in the morning, ten in the afternoon. (J: Oh!) Oh yeah, your two breaks and your half hour for lunch.

J: Okay. What did you do during your breaks and during lunch.

E: Although during wartime we worked six to two, and we ate on the fly. During wartime.

J: What do you mean six to two?

E: Ah, you'd eat while you were working, but you would have a ten minute break. Instead of taking a half an hour you'd eat, they used to call it, you eat on the fly. (J: I see) You'd eat your lunch while your machine was going.

J: What kind of material were you working on?

E: Oh no, this was all wool.

J: This was the wool?

E: Yeah, Worsted Mills.

J: Yeah. This was in the Pacific. You worked from '42 to '44.

E: Yeah, and the Arlington was the same way. The Arlington during wartime, you worked straight from six to two, but they gave you a ten minute break. But you would eat on the fly, your lunch.

J: But you're saying six to two. Six in the morning until two.

E: Two in the afternoon.

J: Oh, then you worked the first shift (E: yeah) as well. (E: yeah) Because you had said you started on the second shift.

E: Second shift, and in the Arlington I worked day shift.

J: Okay. Um, what did you used to bring for lunch? What did people bring for lunch?

E: Um, you brought everything. I used to bring a couple of sandwiches, because we had a cart that would go by, and you could buy milk, or coffee, (J: umhm) or donuts, whatever you wanted.

J: Umhm. Okay. And um, did anybody call you by any nicknames in the mills?

E: No. (J: it was always Emily) Always Emily.

J: Yeah. Did you have a place to relax during your breaks? Did you have a recreation room?

E: No, we'd sit down on the bobbins, and you'd sit down there.

J: And what do you talk about when you'd (--)

E: Oh you'd talk about the work. And it was, well it was during wartime. You'd wonder when the war was going to end, and different things.

J: Okay, when work stopped, and you, and (--) First of all did you have time cards coming in and out?

E: Yes, you had to punch in and punch out.

J: And punch out. (E: Yeah) And then did you walk home with girlfriends?

E: Yeah, yeah, we'd walk home.

J: What would you talk about when you were walking home?

E: Everything! Children, or the house, or what you were going to buy, or what you were going to make to eat.

J: When did you go shopping? When did you have time?

E: Saturdays.

J: Where would you go?

E: Go down street.

J: What's down street?

E: We'd go to uh, Gannons, or Brokelman's. And then when my mother had the store, she'd get the things from us and we'd buy most of it from her.

J: Yeah, but how clothes?

E: Oh clothes, we'd go to Essex Street.

J: Yeah, tell me about it.

E: You'd go to either uh, there was Hitchcock's, then there was Cherry and Webbs, or you had your 5 & 10's. You had Woolworth, Kresge, Nelson's . You had a lot of places to go shopping.

[ Soundtrack from the "Bob Newhart Show" playing on TV in background]

J: Was that enjoyable?

E: Oh yeah! You weren't afraid to walk the streets. [chuckles]

J: Really? Did you have a car?

E: No.

J: Anyway, what was the center of your social life? What would you say was the center of your social life? Was it the workplace where you, you could meet your friends, or outside of work?

E: I think it was where we'd go to work. Then you'd talk about different things. Because you really couldn't go any place. No car. There was trolley cars. We'd go to Canobie Lake. You have to take the trolley.

J: And when would you go to Canobie Lake?

E: We'e probably go maybe on a Sun (--) Or we'd go to the beach. We had this man Mr. Saffey, uh, he had a truck. And he'd take us, we'd sit in the back of the truck and we'd all go to the beach with him. We'd pay so much.

J: And when you say "we all", who would go?

E: There'd be my mother, my sister, then my husband went, and Edmund, Elaine.

J: Those are your children. (E: Yeah) Yeah.

E: And um, that's how we got to the beach.

J: What would you do at the beach. [People having conversation in background]

E: Sit at the shore, go swimming, walk around. And then uh, Mr. Saffey would bring us back home in the truck.

J: Okay. Uh, are you in contact with any of your friends. Any of your friends left that you used to work with in those days?

E: Oh yeah!



J: Who are they? Do you remember?

E: There's Vi.

J: Who's Vi? What was her name?

E: Vianne, which I worked with her at Raytheon. Anna Cookson, I worked with her in the Arlington Mill. Midge, I worked with her at Raytheon. Ellen Letini. Then I see one of my bosses every so often, Stanley Kotz. Her lives in North Andover.

J: What mill was he at?

E: No, he was in Raytheon.

J: Oh, these are all, this is later on. But from way back in the mills, any of them still around?

E: There isn't too many left.

J: No, huh. Well you know, to get back to the mills, I have a note here. It says in 1935 the automatic looms increased from 21% to 67%. Did you ever feel?

E: I never worked in a weave room.

J: Okay, that would have been in the weave room.

E: The looms is in a weave room.

J: Yeah, weave room. So your job (--)

Side I ends

Side II begins

J: I want to ask you, were you at all ambitious when you worked in the mills? Did you want to go onto a better job? In other words did they have promotions in the mills? ]

E: No. No. There was no promotions. It was was either that or a different job, but I was satisfied with what I was doing.

J: You never wanted to do anything else?

E: No.

J: Why? Why do you say that?

E: Because I was content with what I was doing.

J: How much were you making a week as assistant?

E: Twenty-one dollars and eighty cents a week.

J: Did you get periodic raises?

E: Got a raise once a year.

J: Was that because you were a good worker, or was it automatic?

E: Automatic. The union.

J: Uh, did you get active in the union?

E: I was in the Arlington Mill. I was a delegate.

J: How and why did you become a delegate?

E: Uh, because there was a lot of them that weren't satisfied. And some of the bosses you had tried to put things over a worker. (J: How?) So they had (--) Uh, they'd tell them they'd have to do this, or do that, and do this, which they didn't have to. And I would go in and fight for the girl.

J: Why would they tell the girl to do something that (--)

E: Because they figured the more production they could get the better they would be.

J: Did these bosses play favorites?

E: Some of them did, not all.

J: Well if they played favorites, how did they play favorites? What would they do?

E: Why they give them better work to, better work than the next one. Because some of the work you had was so bad that uh, you had an awful time with it. It wouldn't wind right, or it wouldn't come down right, and they were all broken in. So they'd give them better work to do than the next one until we put a stop to it.

J: So you became a delegate to improve the (E: I became, yeah. That's right), to improve those conditions. Were you ever, did you ever feel you were discriminated against by the bosses?

E: No. No. No.

J: But you felt some of your friends were?

E: Some of the friends were, yeah.

J: Did you consider it hard, or dangerous work?

E: To work in the mill?

J: Yeah.

E: I didn't think so. Not if you paid attention to what you were doing. Because when you worked in the mill you couldn't fool around. You have to keep your mind on the work, because some of the machinery was dangerous. You could lose your arm.

J: Did you ever sit down?

E: Oh yeah, we'd sit down.

J: Describe um, the job.

E: Uh, well the work I done was standing, but once the machine was going you could sit down on the bobbin and just watch it.

J: What work was that again?

E: That was in the drawing room. English drawing room.

J: English drawing room? Can you describe what you did there?

E: Well the machine, the frame, it was, they called it a frame. And up above you'd put your bobbins, and you bring your yarn down and connect it to the yarn that was on the bobbin that was running out. And as each of these bobbins ran out you'd have to replace another one. And they'd come down into a round bobbin, that when the machine stopped you'd take them out. They weighed about five/six pounds.

J: Did you have any help on your frame?

E: No, we ran them by ourselves.

J: Did you have just one frame?

E: One frame.

J: Just one frame. And you would stand there (--)

E: And watch your work. And then if you're work was going good you could sit down until your machine stopped. You took off your bobbins, put an empty one. Then they'd refill again.

J: Umhm. And was that piece work, or (--)

E: No, that wasn't piece work.

J: Okay. And that was in the Pacific Mills?

E: Yeah.

J: Why did you leave the Pacific Mills after two years?

E: I didn't want second shift any more. I wanted the day shift.

J: Why?

E: I got sick of the second shift, because it seems you were working all day, and all morning in the house, and all afternoon in the mills. And I figured the day shift, you'd come home, at least you could go out if you wanted to go visiting. Second shift, you couldn't do anything. You come home, it was time to go to bed.

J: So you decided to switch jobs yourself?

E: That's right.

J: And this was still during the war?

E: That's right.

J: So would you say there was still plenty of work in the city?

E: Oh yes there was plenty of work! While the war was going you could get a job anyplace. You could quit today, get a job tomorrow.

J: So how did you do it anyway?

E: Well I told him if I didn't get on days I'd leave. And there was no opening. So I went to the Arlington Mill and I got hired right away.

J: Because you were experienced. (E: Yeah) What did they hire you as?

E: Weigh girl. Weigh boxes.

J: What's that?

E: That's the same thing. In the drawing room, English drawing.

J: So in 1944 you started in the (--)

E: And I stayed there until the mill shut down in 1950.

J: Did that give you more leisure time?

E: Oh yes, because I'd be home at 2:00 in the afternoon.

J: So what would you do then?

E: I'd go home, I had the children. I'd do what work I had to do. I'd start supper. Then I'd take the kids and we'd go down to my mother's because she lived right across the street. She had the store. And I'd sit there with the children.

J: Until what time?

E: Till eight o'clock. And I'd take them home, and I'd get them ready and they'd go to bed.

J: Was your husband in the army? (E: No, no.) Well then he was still working in the mill? (E: Umhm)  
Uh huh.

E: Then my first husband died, and I remarried.

J: Well tell me about that?

E: All right, my first husband died, then I remarried and (--)

J: What year?

E: 1948.

J: Oh, all right. Well in 1944 you went to the Arlington Mill, (E: yeah) okay. And your husband died in 1948?

E: 1946. (J: Uh huh) And I got married in '48.

J: How did you meet your second husband?

E: His uncle used to trade over my mother's, and he was in the Navy. And he come down to visit his uncle, and that's how I met him.

J: Where was he from?

E: He was from Winooski, Vermont.

J: He was from Winooski, Vermont.

E: Yeah.

J: Was he stationed locally?

E: He was stationed at Portsmouth , New Hampshire, the Naval prison.

J: And you were a widow. (E: Yeah) And you met him through your (--)

E: My husband's uncle. And then we went out a year and a half, and I got married in 1948.

J: So you had four children when you married him?

E: Five!

J: You had five children!

E: By my first marriage. And he was single, and I had two by him.

J: Um, did he have to go away because he was in the Navy, and you wait (--)

E: No, no, no, no. He was discharged when we got married.

J: Oh, and so you settled in Lawrence.

E: That's right.

J: When did you live in Lawrence at that time?

E: We lived at 423 Hampshire street in Lawrence.

J: Was that a tenement, or a single family ?

E: Yes, a tenement.

J: And what did he do when you got married?

E: He worked in the uh, well he was the cook. And then he went into the Wood Mill, and he stayed there. And um, then he got sick, because he was 100% service connected and he had to stop working.

J: Oh, he was disabled.

E: Yeah, he was a 100% disabled, service connected.

J: Is that the reason you kept on working, or did you want to do it?

E: Oh well my husband was getting a check every month.

J: Well why did you keep on working?

E: Because I didn't want to stay home. I figured I'd work.

J: Okay. Why did you leave? You say you left the Arlington Mill in 1950.

E: It shut down.

J: Oh tell me about that.

E: It went out of business.

J: Tell me about that.

E: Well the people asked me for a raise, and they said if they took the raise they were going to close the doors. And nobody believed them. So they still went for the raise and the Arlington shut the doors.

J: Did they give the workers any notice?

E: Not in them days. They just said the mill was shut down. That was it!

J: You had no notice.

E: No notice. They kept telling us if we took the raise they'd shut down, but we never believed it.

J: Is that right!

E: And that was it!

J: But you were in a union at that time.

E: Didn't make any difference.

J: Were they negotiating?

E: The war was over.

J: So would you say that time were getting bad in Lawrence?

E: Times were getting bad then.

J: Had you heard of any other mills closing before the Lawrence.?

E: They were all closed. They all closed. And we went to work at the [Adams?] Textile up in New Hampshire.

J: You went all the way to New Hampshire?

E: I worked there in the third shift, but I worked in the Pacific, in the Shoe Shops in between.

The Milton Shoe, that was the name of it. I was thinking of Billy. Milton Shoe.

J: All right, when the Arlington closed in 1950 without notice, you went to the Milton Shoe in Methuen?

E: That's right.

J: And what did you do there?

E: I worked there five years, and I was a heel trimmer. And I'd take some of the work home, and the kids would help me cut the heels so I could make more money on piecework.

J: Oh, so then you did start piece work, but that was in the shoe.

E: In the shoe shop.

J: Did you have a hard time switching over from textiles to shoes?

E: It was awkward at first, but then you got accustomed to it.

J: How, who taught you? Who taught you?

E: They taught us in the, in the shoe shop.

J: Well would a boss teach you, or just a fellow (--)

E: They had, no, they had one of the workers teach you. She was a floor girl, and she'd teach you what to do.

J: Did you like it?



E: Yeah, I loved it! I worked there five years. I enjoyed every minute of it.

J: Did you like it more than textiles?

E: Yes, because it was more relaxing, and it was piece work. But the girls were very good to work with. And the boss we had was fabulous.

J: Did you have a union in the shoe shop?

E: No we didn't.

J: Did you get periodic raises in the shoe shop?

E: Well the uh, if shoes, they automatically go up themselves. You could make, because you could make good money on piece work.

J: What was good money like?

E: Uh, you could bring in \$200.00 dollars a week.

J: \$200.00 a week in those days! Did you make that much?

E: I'd make a \$150.00, because I used to bring home work to the house.

J: And your children helped?

E: And the kids would help me.

J: Oh, that's very interesting. You stayed there five years. What make you leave Milton?

E: I got pregnant with Fran. Oh, the Milton Shoe shut down.

J: Did they give you any notice?

E: Yes, they told us that they were shutting down.

J: Why did they shut down?

E: I guess it was, the boss wanted to retire.

J: You mean the owner?

E: The owner wanted to retire.

J: So he just went out of business? (E: He just) I see. And so where did you go from there?

E: Went to the Ames Textile in Manchester, New Hampshire on the third shift.

J: So you went back to textiles? Why did you have to go all the way to Manchester, New Hampshire?

E: There was nothing here. There was nothing. (J: Did you look?) The mills were shut down. (J: Uh huh. Uh huh) The mills were shut down here.

J: Did you, would you say it was pretty bad in Lawrence?

E: Oh yeah!

J: How did people live?

E: A lot of them went on welfare I guess.

J: And how about unemployment insurance? Did you have that?

E: We had unemployment, but you weren't getting that much. (J: Uh huh) So I figured we'd work. I went to work at the Ames Textile. I worked third shift. I stayed there I think six, seven months. Then they wanted me to go on days, and I couldn't get a ride in. So.

J: How did you get in in the beginning?

E: We had somebody bring us in the third shift.

J: Did you pay though?

E: Yes. Yeah, we paid \$5.00 a week.

J: Uh huh. You car pooled.

E: And then when I left there I went to [Ghaunt's mill?] in Methuen.

J: What did they make at Ghaunt's?

E: Uh, that was Worsted too. I was on skill boxes. And it was all Worsted.

J: What was that, a small company?

E: Yeah, it wasn't that big. There was maybe about six or seven girls worked the third shift. That's it!

J: So you got to know your bosses pretty well? (E: Um) How did they treat you?

E: They were pretty good. We have one boss, uh, he'd go and get drunk. [Laughing]

J: He'd go and get what?

E: Drunk, and you wouldn't see him! So we uh, I left it.

J: You left it? You didn't like the way it was run?

E: No, I didn't like the way it was run. There was nobody around! If anybody got hurt there was nobody there.

J: Well you can't run a business like that.

E: Oh, section hand didn't care. He went out!

J: He went out of the building, and just left the girls alone?

E: That's it, yup.

J: Did any of the girls become bosses?

E: Not in the mill. It was all men.

J: Did you like that idea?

E: I didn't mind it. I'll tell you something. I'd rather work for a man boss than a woman boss.

J: Why do you say that?

E: Because it's true. Uh, you get along better with the men bosses.

J: Did you ever have any sexual harassment at work?

E: No, no. No, we never had anything like that.

J: Did you ever hear about anything like that?

E: No, no.

J: So they never talked to you (--)

E: No, there was nothing like that in my times. Nothing.

J: Did you ever hear about married women going out with the bosses, or the bosses (--)

E: In the mill? No. No. I've heard of it in the electronic places. Not in the mills. Never heard it.

J: Hm. So anyway you couldn't get into Manchester, New Hampshire anymore. What happened after that?

E: No, so I, I came here, I came and I went to Ghaunt's in Methuen. (J: Umhm) And I stayed there and I didn't like the way that place was, so I left it. And 1965 I went to Malden Mills, and I stayed there till I retired after seventeen years.

J: I know, but in between that, in 1959, where did you go?

E: I worked at Steven's Mill in North Andover.

J: In '57?

E: Yeah, I done winding there.

J: Was that something that you learned at Steven's, or had you done this before?

E: No, I had done winding before. (J: Where?) I had done winding at the um, where did I do the winding? I had done it once before. In the Pacific. (J: Oh) So I had done winding.

J: You had been taught how to do it when you first started at the mill. When did you start at Hytron?

E: Hytron? I started there, that was after the mills shut down. I didn't stay there too long, I didn't care for it. But '59 I went to uh, Raytheon.

J: Let's get back to your very first job though in high tech. You went to Hytron, why? What was the reason.

E: Well there was nothing else around here, so I went there. And over there if you put out your quota, you'd either get a flower, or you'd get a box of chocolates. That I'll never forget as long as I live.

J: It was entirely different than the mills then?

E: Very different. Very different. There you have to sit down. (J: And?) And uh, you're at a machine, and it was just winding wires. And if you didn't put your quota, you didn't get nothing. You put your quota, you got a box of chocolates, or a carnation.

J: And how much money?

E: Well the pays weren't good then. I forgot what I was making. I worked so many places I forgot what I was getting an hour.

J: Was it eight, eight hours a day?

E: Eight hours a day. (J: Five days a week?) Yeah. And I'd have to get a ride, and a girl would pick me up.

J: And you'd pay her?

E: And I'd pay her.

J: And um, compare it to the mill. Did you like it better?

E: No, I liked the mill better, but when I went to Raytheon I enjoyed it there. I really did.

J: What was the difference between Hytron and Raytheon.

E: Oh Raytheon was a lot of difference. Lot of difference. Uh, we enjoyed working with the bosses. My first job there I was on a machine, and uh, they were very good. They explained everything. And then from there, from the machine, I went into the bonding room, where you had to bond with epoxy. And from there I became a runner, where you took different, you took issues. If they needed screws, or uh, diodes, or, you'd go and get them from the warehouse.

J: Oh, you would personally get up, and you were able to travel around. (E: Yeah) At Hytron you just sat?

E: At Hytron you have to sit down. And the atmosphere and I just didn't care for it.

J: Well what was wrong with the atmosphere?

E: Everything! They had favoritism. Uh, if you didn't put out your quota they'd harass you. Uh, if you put your quota they 'd give you a box of chocolate. It was like saying, you be a good girl I'll give you a cone of ice cream. I just didn't care for it.

J: Who was your boss?

E: Got, I forgot it. I forgot her.

J: It was a woman?

E: It was a woman boss.

J: Now that the difference. You said in the mills they never had woman bosses.

E: This wasn't a mill.

J: That's what I'm saying. But there's a difference, isn't there?

E: Over there, yeah. (J: Yes) Now in Raytheon (--)

J: Where was she from?

E: Oh I don't know. I wasn't there that long. See in Raytheon they have uh, they have women, like my sister what she was. They were altogether different.

J: Uh, this Hytron, where was it? What city?

E: Danvers, Mass.

J: How did you go there? Did (--)

E: I'd get a ride.

J: I know, but who told you to go there and apply for a job?

E: Somebody says, "oh go to Hytron, they're hiring. You make good money." I went there, forget it.

J: It was such a difference from textile.

E: It was a big difference.

J: Did you think about that before you went?

E: No, because I didn't know what it was. I didn't know what it was.

J: Is it just that you needed a job?

E: It's just that I wanted to go to work.

J: What were they making Emily? What was Hytron making? Do you know what they were making, or were you just doing your job?

E: I forgot.

J: You forgot what you were making.

E: I forgot what I was making there. I hated it so much.

J: From day one?

E: From day one I hated it!

J: How long did you stay?

E: I think I stayed there six months, that was it. I quit. I just didn't care for it.

J: Did you always feel that you had that option to quit? In other words you didn't need a job to live.

E: I, I never quit a job. That was the first job I ever quit. I just didn't care for it.

J: Did you give it any thought, or you just quit?

E: No! I went in this day, and I says, "that's it." And I told them (--)

J: What happened that day that pushed you over?

E: I went in and I just sat down, and I says, "why am I doing this?" I got up, I went to the bathroom, and I says, after today, that's it.

J: Why? Was it frustrating?

E: No, you know when you get something that you just don't want, and you have to believe it, I left it.

J: You did. Were they giving you any benefits at Hytron?

E: They had benefits, but they weren't that good then.

J: Well more than the mills.

E: Um, (J: more than the mill?) the mill, I had Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

J: You did!

E: Oh yeah! You had Blue Cross and Blue Shield in the mills.

J: How about Hytron? You don't remember?

E: I don't remember, because I wasn't there that long, but I always had Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

J: Did you ever feel like you've ever worked in a sweat shop? You know how they say, "oh, it was a sweat shop. I fell like (--)"

E: No, not where I was.

J: Never? (E: No) Never in all of your work? So you always felt pretty independent.

E: I felt good.

J: Except at Hytron.

E: The Hytron, forget it. I couldn't (--)

J: You thought they treated you like a baby, huh?

E: No, I don't know. I just didn't care for it. The atmosphere, it was closed in, and there was a small room. I just didn't care for it.

J: I see. Did any member of your family go to work with you at Hytron?

E: No.

J: That was a move you made on your own.

E: Yeah, on my own.

J: I see. And your husband was out of work at that time.

E: Yeah.

J: Because he was disabled. (E: Yeah) Who uh, your mother still took care of the children?

E: My mother always took care of my children. Then my sister, she'd come home from work and take care, she'd take care of them in the afternoon while I worked in the afternoon.

J: Did you ever consider doing anything different when the mills closed in Lawrence. Why would you go back into a place like Hytron? Did you ever consider working at a (--)

E: Well I had never gave it a thought, because I didn't think, I thought it would be just like working the mill, but there was a big difference with electronics. Very big difference.



J: Uh, in your whole life didn't you ever want to do anything different?

E: No.

J: You never have the desire?

E: No. No.

J: Uh, the mills, you liked the mills.

E: I enjoyed the mills.

J: What was it about the mills you enjoyed?

E: I don't know. You were more relaxed, and you done your work. As long as you done your work nobody bothered you. So I was more relaxed there.

J: So when you decided that day to leave Hytron, what was in your mind? Were you going to just stay home?

E: No, I left there and I got a job someplace else. (J: Where?) That was '59. That's when I went to Raytheon.

J: Were they hiring? Did you uh, ?

E: I went to Raytheon, and I put my name down and I got called, and that was it.

J: Uh, when you say you put your name down, you went to the?

E: Well you have to go to the uh, personal office. (J: And?) And you uh, get interviewed, and then you get called.

J: Did you have to fill out an application?

E: Oh yeah. No matter where you went you had to fill an application out.

J: At Raytheon, did you have to have experience before they would take you?

E: No, no, because they taught you. They had group leaders.

J: Um, what year was that anyway.

E: 1959, November the 11<sup>th</sup>. I'll never forget it. I started Armistice Day. Because over there Armistice Day isn't a holiday.

J: Where was Raytheon?

E: It was in Andover then. York Street?

J: Is that the old Shawsheen Mill building?

E: Yeah.

J: And that's where it was.

E: That's where I was.

J: Uh, how long did you wait? No, how long did you wait before you filled out your application and they called you?

E: A week. (J: Just a week) One week.

J: How was that first day at Raytheon?

E: Very good. I didn't mind it at all. It was very good. The bosses were very very good.

J: Were they men or women?

E: Men. But then you have your group leaders, they were women, but they were fabulous. Big difference.

J: And what were you doing?

E: I was on a machine, and then they needed me in the bonding room.

End of Tape